

1628 Lindbergh Drive  
Lansing, MI 48910  
February 15, 2011

Re: A BIG "NO" to the elimination of the Item-Pricing Law for **GROCERIES**

First to Governor Snyder: I want to make it clear that I supported you in your election for Governor of Michigan and voted for you. I certainly believed that you were the best man for the job.

However, your and other's commitment to eliminating the individual price marking **MUST BE MODIFIED**. Michigan's citizens deserve the continuation of the individual marking for **ALL GROCERY ITEMS**. Groceries are clearly a necessity for every family; these are not a frivolous purchases. And I can personally attest that over the years, I have found that larger retail GROCERY stores have already taken advantage of shoppers, even with this law in place.

And, if there is some relaxing of the individual pricing on other items, please insist that easily understood pricing standards and language with consumers in mind is the outcome. We need to know the actual cost of an item **BEFORE** we get to the check-out lane.

Unless you retain or modify the "rolling back" of the entire item-pricing law and continue to commit to individual item pricing, especially on GROCERIES, you are going to essentially be throwing the hard-pressed citizens of Michigan into a worst situation. And there is no doubt that, without the checks and balances that individual price marking provides, there is too big a temptation by some retailers to feel that they have a free reign to do 'Whatever It Takes' to continue to line their pockets.

I'm sure you agree that it has been pretty easy in this country over the last decade to blame **EVERYTHING** on the politicians. But, **YOU** will be feeding into that concept if you bow to the pressure of retail giants such as Meijer and get rid of individual pricing on groceries, at the expense of the people of Michigan. Clearly those **HUGE** donations from **Meijer** to Governor Snyder's campaign and to the RGA (Republican Governor's Association) will center the bulls-eye right on any Republican's back as well as reflecting poorly on all other politicians. And then, again, we're right back to the dogma that politicians say "just isn't so": **"You Can Buy Me, Just Name Your Price."**

I am going to offer specific examples, using **Meijer**, because of my 30 + years of shopping experiences and observations at their stores versus the practices I have seen at other grocery stores in the area. Those observations are juxtaposed upon those campaign contributions. It is simply too easy to believe that Governor Snyder's initial interest in getting rid of this law is because Meijer "bought" him. And while I don't know the names of other Meijer executives or their political contributions, these donations already speak volumes: **Meijer President Mark A Murray and his wife who contributed \$6800 to <sup>Snyder's</sup> your campaign and Fredrick Meijer and wife who donated \$6800. And two very large gifts were made, by Meijer, to the RGA, in the amounts of \$150,000 and \$50,000.**

And while it is easy to notice and point out to the advantages to a retailers' finances (thus reinforcing the image of politicians doing this because they were "bought"), I can assure you, as someone who has been in the position of struggling with a very limited budget, it is probably difficult for you to understand the importance a few cents on each item makes as well as the difficulty in finding the lowest prices on competing grocery items.

A simple economic concept is that people need to make choices based on all available information. Many of us first pick up the grocery flyer for the store. I have included a lesson in surprises and pitfalls of pricing using that flyer.

Furthermore, GROCERY stores have already been very "casual" in their use of the itemizing the individual items. **AND**, they are **ALREADY** equally casual about labeling the displays and shelves for the price of items. **AND**, without the 'checks and balances' provided by this law, it translates into just one more insult to the hard pressed families of Michigan !!! The retailers further line their pockets, but I can assure you that families of Michigan are the ones that will feel the real impact of the "roll-back" of individual price marking on grocery items.

Without clear individual pricing, it is impossible to determine the best ways to cut corners, save money and live within an impossibly tight budget.

An easy example is that some stores will display items at the end of aisles. This practice has been already used to deceive customers because these items can be at full retail price and without the benefit of any sort of label or signage as to the price of the items; they are NOT individually priced with a sale price. BUT, shoppers, believing that these are sale

Even with the current law in place, there have been many, many times when I am searching for a price scanner or dealing with the issue of these semi-"deceptive" practices at the check-out. And while I have the luxury to pursue such time-consuming price checking; most families do not.

The real cost to the retailers of this individual item pricing is the fact that WHEN THEY ARE CAUGHT deceiving the customer, they have to pay a penalty of up to \$5.00 plus the difference between the real price and the marked price on the item. And, SADLY, this threat of a penalty is what has been necessary to keep some retailers honest.

Based upon these various arguments, I hope that it is much more clear to you, that AT LEAST until our economic situation improves, THE REPEAL OF THIS LAW, ESPECIALLY IN GROCERY STORES, IS JUST PLAIN BAD FOR MICHIGAN FAMILIES at the level that harms them the most !

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Elms-Barclay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Suzanne Elms-Barclay

## WHAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS PLAN TO ELIMINATE ITEM PRICING:

- I want to know the price of the item when I look at it on the shelf. So many times the shelf price is not placed accurately for the item sitting there.
- Why are all these stores so interesred in hiding their prices? They wouldn't be planning on cheating any of their customers would they? We have a good law in place right now.
- I see this proposal as nothing more than payback for political contributions. Whether or not any potential savings end up back in the business or executive compensation pools remains to be seen, but if recent history is any guide the answer isn't particularly difficult to divine.
- The reward system keeps the store's pricing records correct and rewards you for catching the error that has already cost you. The rules have everything to do with the price being clearly and correctly marked on the item thus the inconsintency causes the store to correct their, I repeat, their mistake. If you remove the requirement to have the price marked on the material you circumvent the law and it becomes useless. And that my friend is exactly what business wants. Shame on you Snyder; you may say you are a nerd but the realilty is you are a typical politician demonstrating

### Keep item pricing

In response to Col. (Ret) Terry Fobbs (Letters, Feb. 7), who wrote that former Attorney General Frank Kelley favors repeal of the Michigan item-pricing law, I feel it is only fair to point out that Kelley is now working for a lobbying firm that is biased towards the Michigan Retailers Association.

I ask the consumer to picture this life-style change: Take a pen and pad to write on the shelf price of every item you want to buy. How else will you know if the price you paid is correct, especially after you get home?

Any repeal should include a provision that if there is an error in pricing, the consumer will be awarded substantially. I would propose increasing the current 10 times the difference to 25 times the difference in overcharge situations, with no upper limit (currently set at \$5). Since the retailers are so confident in their "technology," they shouldn't be opposed to such a provision.

**Professor John P. Hay**  
Lansing

wer structure. Governor Snyder is pocketing it to the people who can

Maybe. Or will retailers simply pocket the savings? It depends on market forces.

The study noted that the greatest burden from the item pricing law falls on those in lower-income consumer groups and those living in areas with low retail competition. But if there's little competition, why lower prices? Eliminate the cost and keep the change. In larger markets, the Retail Association expects basic competition among retailers to drive down prices.

Michigan is one of the few states that require item pricing, a legacy of the 1976 law championed by former Attorney General Frank Kelley.

Earlier this month he endorsed the change proposed by Snyder, saying in-store scanning technology is now reliable and works well in other states. Unmentioned by Kelley was that the firm he founded, Kelley Cawthorne, has Wal-Mart Stores Inc. as one of its clients. Kelley says has never counseled Wal-Mart, nor had anything to do with the company on pricing matters. The Wal-Mart business, he says, is handled by Rob Elhenicky, one of Kelley Cawthorne's partners. The firm, in its filings with the Michigan Secretary of State, has reported more than \$118,000 in payments from Wal-Mart since 2004.

What do you think? Write Mickey Hirten,

### Pricing law study sketchy

Regarding the Anderson Economic Group study mentioned in the article about item pricing (LSJ, Jan. 25):

The study and article mention a cost of \$2.2 billion per year to price items. Do the math: you would need 40,000 employees pricing items, each earning \$50,000 per year for your costs to equal \$2 billion!

The study also indicates that 2083 hours of labor per year and miscellaneous materials costing \$6,000 to \$10,000 per year is required to price 5 million items. Again, do the math: this calculates to 1 cent per item, not the 15 to 25 cents per item mentioned in the study.

There are several other conclusions in the Anderson Economic Group study that are inaccurate and misleading. Please take the time to read it. Just do an Internet search for 'Anderson Economic Group.'

Why do we allow inaccurate information to be distributed without question? It might help if Gov. Rick Snyder were to put his 'nerd' glasses back on. This repeal would cost jobs and provide no savings for the consumer.

**John McKenzie**  
Caledonia

### Pricing law necessary

Caveat emptor: Let the buyer beware.

Retailers win, consumers lose—a sign of the Republican approach to building a new Michigan. Let's get rid of item pricing. After all, why should we have to know the price of anything? Hey, we can say we don't want it at checkout. That we may have chosen another brand when we had the opportunity is of little consequence.

Have you seen the big sale sign over the item on sale and a bunch of other items as well? How many have trouble reading the shelf labels that are two inches from the floor? How many have tried to use one of the few scanners to find it out of order? All these things have happened to me. But the retailers can save the cost of the price tags and the cost of the employee who puts the tags on everything.

I think that's called cutting hours or maybe cutting staff which will help solve our unemployment problem, won't it?

**Howard Dodge**  
Lansing

# Let's go Grocery Shopping with this week's Meijer ad !

OK. THESE ONES ARE EASY.

"ALL VARIETIES" ARE ON SALE:

THIS ONE EXCLUDES PUMPKIN:



## A BIT OF A "CATCH"

CHEX CEREALS ON SALE! WAIT, WHERE ARE WHEAT CHEX & WHAT DO THEY COST?

ARE THESE STILL \$2 ?



\*Price Drop merchandise. While at least 2,000 last chainwide.

"SELECTED VARIETIES" ???? WHICH ONES ARE ON SALE AND WHICH ARE REGULAR PRICE ?  
ONES THAT STILL PROVIDE A PROFIT, EVEN ON SALE, ARE THE SALE PRICE. EXPENSIVE ONES AREN'T.

